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SUBJECT: JERUSALEM MEDIA REACTION (07/07): Hamas Must Not Be An
Obstacle to Reconciliation

Main Stories:

Al-Hayat Al-Jadida leads with Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas' interview with Al-Falastiniya TV on July 6. Abbas stated that the "acceptance of the two-state solution and the halt of settlement activities are not Palestinian demands only but also international demands that should be met by the Israeli side." Abbas went on to state that Palestinians will not resume negotiations with the Israelis unless these conditions are met. Abbas praised the support of the international community and the US administration, which has insisted that Israel stop settlement activities and accept the two-state solution. On the subject of national reconciliation talks, Abbas said that Hamas' extreme positions are what have caused the national unity talks to fail thus far.

Al-Hayat Al-Jadida reports on the meeting between Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak and US envoy George Mitchell in London, noting that some progress has been made on the peace process in the Middle East. The paper reported on their joint statement following the meeting, in which they noted that "all aspects of the Middle East peace and security" were discussed, and further re-affirmed their commitment to a regional peace between Israel and the Palestinians, Syria and Lebanon.

Al-Ayyam reports on statements made by Israeli Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman that due to a "conflict of interest" regarding his residency in a West Bank settlement, he has deferred to other Israeli officials in pursuing negotiations with the US and the international community on the settlements issue.

All dailies report on the meeting between PLO Chief negotiator Saeb Erekat and the German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier on

July 6 in the West Bank, in which Erekat briefed Steinmeier on the situation in the Palestinian Territories. The papers noted Erekat's comments after the meeting that "the international community must tell the Israeli government that it bears responsibility for destroying peace efforts if it continues its policies."

Al-Ayyam, Al-Hayat Al-Jadida, and Al-Quds all report positively on the US-Russian summit in Moscow (July 6) between Presidents Obama and Dmitri Medvedev. The reports focus on the agreements between the US and Russia to reduce nuclear warheads. Cartoons in al-Quds and al-Ayyam gave a positive impression of the US role in the summit's outcome; one cartoon shows President Obama leading Medvedev by the hand away from a large pile of nuclear weapons.

Al-Quds reports on a statement issued by the European Commission condemning the continuation of settlement activities and referring to all settlements constructed in the Palestinian Territories as "illegitimate." It went on to state that measures imposed upon the Palestinians by the Israelis have had long-term negative consequences on the Palestinian economy that have in turn increased the burden on the international donor community.

Al-Quds reports that the Israeli Housing Ministry has given financial incentives to settlers in order to attract them to settlements constructed in the West Bank, and to increase the number of settlers residing on those lands.

BLOCK QUOTES:

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1)Wadi' Abu Nassar, Al-Quds, "Interesting facts about settlements" (07/07): "The Arab states should not be satisfied only with statements made by the US administration regarding the freeze of the settlement activities, it should be made clear to everyone that the continuation of settlement activities doesn't only violate international law and the rights of Palestinians, but it also harms Israel, as it legitimizes its illegal activities - which in the end will legitimize any illegal act in the future by Israelis against Israel itself!!"

2) Rajab Abu Sirriyeh, Al-Ayyam, "Internal consensus, early rejection" (07/07): "The Palestinian factions - mainly Hamas - should realize that the Palestinians can't continue with this division... We can't let time slip away without achieving any progress in the national dialogue and towards ending the division. Hamas should respond to the demands of the Gazans with no shelter or no life... It should accept compromises to put an end to their suffering."

WALLES